

Research Article

Leadership Style and Employee Engagement: Mediating Role of Organizational Commitment in Employees of Nepali Commercial Banks

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A B S T R A C T

Employee engagement has captured the attention of managers and researchers. With its investigation, the researchers have found the phenomenon more complex than ever. The purpose of this study is to examine the direct relationships between Leadership style and Employee commitment mediated by Organizational commitment among employees in the private commercial banks of Nepal. A survey questionnaire was used to collect data from 200 employees working in three commercial banks, of which 181 questionnaires were used for further analysis. The Barron and Kenny (2004) regression analysis was conducted to test the hypotheses. Regression results showed a significant relationship between Leadership style & Employee engagement, Organizational commitment & Employee engagement and Leadership style & Organizational commitment. Likewise, Partial mediation was observed among Leadership style, Organizational commitment and Employee engagement. Implications and future direction of the findings of the research are discussed.

Keywords: Leadership Style, Employee Engagement, Employee Commitment, Banking Sector

Introduction

The recent report of the State of the Global Workplace presents that 85% of employees worldwide are not engaged or actively disengaged in their job (Gallup, 2017). The problem appears to be more serious in the Asian Context in which about 6% of employees are engaged in their job from Japan and China (Gallup, 2017). According to Maskey and Mishra (2018) a study conducted in Nepal found that the time spent by skilled and unskilled labors in unproductive work were 43.08% and 44.26% respectively. Not just performance but satisfaction from the job is also a big issue (Bhatta et al. 2018). As such, searching for new ways of enhancing work engagement would be vital for organizations to sustain competitive advantages. With the

war for talent on the rise, investment in human capital is important for organizational success in the competitive business environment (Youssef & Luthans, 2007). As an emerging and a competitive sector of Nepal, the banking sector is facing challenges in managing human resources so that employee engagement in the workplace is an important aspect to overcome such situations (Biswakarma, 2015).

Leading is all about creating hope and making the workforce dedicated towards optimal performance. (Mishra, 2018). Mishra (2019) emphasized on value management as an investment in the brain which results in gain, however investments in cash may sometime crash. (Mishra, 2019) Leadership style is the most prevalent factor that influences the employees' attitudes and behaviors including

organizational commitment. Leaders have adopted various styles when they lead others in the organization. (Brown, 2003; Cheong, 2008; Chiang & Wang, 2012; Clark, Hartline & Jones, 2009; Cox, 2001) as cited in Alkahtani, (2015). In the study of Luthan & Peterson (2002) it is clear that they are confident and have higher levels of self-efficacy, such as transformational leaders and will be able to foster engagement in their employees more effectively than those with lower self-efficacy. Organizational commitment is a common phenomenon which has been extensively addressed by many researchers worldwide due to its importance to the organization (e.g. Angle & Perry, 1981; Kim, 2001; Lio & Nyhan, 1994; Lo, Ramayah & Min, 2009 as cited in Alkahtani, 2015). It is a common observation that commitment usually leads to better performance and engagement in the workplace. Moreover, Leadership style also plays significant role in EE.

Employee Engagement is the critical factor to determine the performance of employees. When employees are engaged at their workplace, the researchers found that performance outcomes such as managerial effectiveness (Harter et al. 2002; Luthans & Peterson, 2002), reduced absenteeism (Gallup, 2004), reduced turnover (Towers Perrin, 2003) are achieved (Chhetri, 2017). Work engagement is also considered to be an important construct that promotes organizational success (Ghadi et al., 2013; Kahn, 1990; Malinowski & Lim, 2015; Rich et al., 2010), enhancing organizational commitment (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008; Ibrahim & Al Falasi, 2014 as cited in Gunasekara & Zheng, 2018). However, there is very limited research regarding the mechanism in which OC changes the relationship between LS and EE. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to investigate the relationship between LS and EE in the mediation of OC in Nepali Commercial Banks.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Leadership Style (LS)

Leadership as phenomena has been investigated by the researcher so that it has several definitions in practice. The most predominant leadership styles that are generally adopted in academic literature are transactional and transformational leadership. (Rowold, 2014).

Transactional Leadership (TL):- The most common LS in behavior science has been pioneered by Burns (1978) who described TL as an exchange in the relationship between a leader and his subordinates. The major focus of transactional leaders is, follower role clarification and leaders have to know about the needs of the employee which requires meeting organizational goals. Thus, TL provides benefits at the achievement of goals while penalties are awarded at not achieving targets.

Transformational Leadership (TL):- The concept of TL was

popularized by Burns (1978) and enhanced by Bass (1985) presenting transformational leadership in the context of formal theory, model and factor measurements. Avolio and Bass (1988, 1994) classified leadership skills into 4 I's including idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. Thus, Transformational Leadership is the interaction between the leader and the subordinates to reach greater inspiration for the organization. This style prioritizes positive changes in the organization's body including subordinates.

Employee Engagement (EE)

The construct EE has emerged from the study of positive organizational behavior (Demerouti, Mostert & Bakker, 2010; Simpson, 2009). It is found that employee engagement has been interchangeably used with similar constructs such as job involvement, job commitment and workaholic employees. However, in academic literature, EE is defined as a distinct and unique construct that comprises cognitive, emotional and behavioral components that are associated with personal role performance (Saks, 2006).

Although a plethora of research work has been found in employee engagement, Kahn (1990) is considered to be the first scholar who presented the concept of engagement in the workplace context (as cited in Tabaziba, 2015). EE is characterized as "a positive, satisfying, business-related perspective that is described by life, devotion and assimilation" (Schaufeli, Salanova, Bakker & Alez-rom, 2002 pp. 74 as cited in Tabaziba, 2015). More importantly, Kahn (1990) conceptualized EE as "the synchronous business and articulation of a man's 'preferred self' in task behaviors that elevate associations with work and to other people, individual nearness (physical, cognitive and emotional) and dynamic, full performance (pp. 700). In this research, the researcher has been adopting the framework developed by Kahn (1990). So, the dimensions of employee engagement are briefly defined;

Vigour:- It can be defined as large amounts of mental flexibility, energy that seeks eagerness to apply exertion and to continue even when faced with difficulty while working, perseverance despite troubles and the ability to put exertion in one's work (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Dedication:- This dimension alludes to being emphatically associated with one's work and encountering a feeling of significance, pride, hugeness, test, motivation and excitement from connecting with it (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Absorption:- It is portrayed by being completely immersed and engaged in one's work to the degree that time passes rapidly and one thinks that it's hard to disconnect oneself from one's work (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Organizational Commitment (OC)

Organizational commitment defined as an employee' strong

belief in and acceptance of an organization's goal and values, effort on behalf of the organization to reach these goals and objectives and the strong desire to maintain membership in the organization (Hunt & Morgan, 1994). Though OC is conceptualizing in several ways, the researcher has chosen the following: (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Affective Organization Commitment:- The effective emotional attachment to identification with and involvement in the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Those who stay in their organizations with a strong commitment retain their position not only because they need the occupation, but also because they want it (Meyer et al., 1993).

Continuance Organization Commitment:- The wish associated with leaving the organization. (Allen & Meyer, 1990). The counterpart to effective organizational commitment is continuance organizational commitment, which considers the idea that individuals do not leave a company for fear of losing their benefits, taking a pay cut and not being able to find another job (Murray, Gregoire & Downey, 1991).

Normative Organization Commitment:- A feeling of obligation to continue employment. (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Normative commitment can increase when an individual feels loyal to his employer or responsible to work for the benefits that he gets from the organization as a result of the desire to compensate the favors received from the institution (Meyer et al. 1993).

The Relationship between Leadership Style and Employee Engagement

Bakker and Schaufeli (2008), found that employees who have positive interactions with their managers have increased levels of engagement. Likewise, Employee-engagement competency of leaders in terms of respect for others and concern for their development and well-being are found to be a good predictor of employees' job performance, job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Alimo Metcalfe et al., 2008). On the basis of the research evidences described above, we have hypothesized the following in the research:

Hypothesis 1: Leadership Style of employees has been positively related to Organizational Engagement in Nepali Commercial Banks

The Relationship between Leadership Style and Organizational Commitment

In the study on staff nurses in a public hospital of Singapore, Avolio et al. (2004) found that transformational leadership positively affects organizational commitment. Similarly, Walumbwa orwa, Wang & Lawler (2005) found that using a transformational leadership style leads to increased organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Limsili

& Ogunlana (2008) proclaimed that transformational leadership is a better leadership style and worker's productivity and organizational commitment is facilitated by transformational leadership. Therefore, the researcher proposes the following:

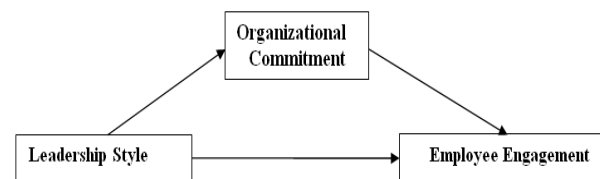
Hypothesis 2: Leadership Style of the Employees has been Positively related to Organizational Commitment in Nepali Commercial Banks

The Relationship between Organizational Commitment and Employee Engagement

Agyemang & Ofei's study (2013), found that employee engagement and organizational commitment are related positively. If employee engagement increases, then organizational commitment can also be increased which helps achieve the organizational objectives. Similarly, Albdour & Altarawneh (2014) have found a positive relationship between employee engagement and organizational commitment in the banking sector. Therefore, the researchers hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 3: Employee Commitment has been Positively Related to Employee Engagement in Nepali Commercial Banks

The Relationship among Leadership Style, Employee Engagement and Organizational Commitment



From the above stated literature, it has been well established in empirical literature that LS & EE, LS & OC and OC & EE influence each other positively in the workplace. However, the mediating effect of OC on the relationship between LS and EE is still unclear since no study has yet been attempted to examine the mediating effect on these relationships in the knowledge of researcher. Based on the findings of previous research, the researchers have proposed the following hypothesis;

Hypothesis 4: Employee Commitment will mediate the relationships between Leadership Style and Employee Engagement. Higher levels of Employee Commitment will negatively affect the relationships between Leadership Style and Employee Engagement

Methods

Sample and Procedure

The population for the study was the employees working in private commercial banks. The number of commercial

bank was 28. However, the researcher has selected three banks (Citizen Bank International Bank Ltd., NMB Bank Ltd. and Mega Bank Nepal Ltd.) from among the 28, based on his convenience. The researchers have applied Convenience Sampling (Non-random sampling) because of accessibility of employees, location of branches and time framework to complete the research work. Due to the chance of non-response errors and missing entry from the respondents, the researchers have distributed the questionnaire to 250 questionnaires to HR manager of each bank. Out of 250 questionnaires distributed, 190 responded to the questionnaire with 181 usable responses. Since this study has been undertaken in the natural setting with the minimal interference, the study setting has been non-contrived. Similarly, this study does not require keeping track of changes in the variables of the study therefore a cross sectional study has been performed.

Measures

This study has used four measures to capture different variables related to this study. Firstly, demographic variables have been measured by four items and later three have been measured by the Likert Scale. A brief description about the measures is stated below:

Leadership Style:- The questionnaire for perceived transformational leadership includes 21 items measured by an abridged version of Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-6S) developed by Bass and Avolio (2008). Respondents have been asked to answer the questionnaire using a scale from 0 to 4, with (0="not at all", 4="frequently") higher scores representing a higher particular leadership style. The sample items include: "My leader expresses with a few simple words what I could and should do." "My leader makes me feel good to be around him/her."

Organizational Commitment:- Organizational commitment is measured through affective, continuance and normative commitment developed by Allen & Meyer (1990). The respondents have been asked to answer using a scale from 1 to 5, with (1="strongly disagree", 5="strongly agree") with higher scores representing higher organizational commitment. Affective organizational commitment has been captured through 7 items. The sample items include: "I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization." The scale's alpha reliability in this study ranged from 0.7 to 0.9. Similarly, Continuance organizational commitment has been captured through 7 items. The sample items include: "I am afraid of what might happen if I quit my job without having another one lined up". The scale's alpha reliability in this study is 0.7 to 0.9. Normative organizational commitment has been captured through 6 items. The sample items include, 'I do believe that person must always be loyal to his/ her organization'. The scale's alpha reliability in this study ranged from 0.7 to 0.9.

Employee Engagement:- Employee Engagement has been measured in a 7 point Likert scale with the 17-items of Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. Respondents have been asked to answer using a scale from 1 to 7, with (1="never", 7="always") with higher scores representing higher employee engagement. The sample items include: "At my work, I feel that I am bursting with energy." And "I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose." This scale has been widely used and validated in diverse cultures and countries (Roof, 2015; Schaufeli et al., 2006; Seppälä et al., 2009; Viljevac et al., 2012 as cited in Gunasekara & Zheng, 2018).

Result

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

A total of 181 respondents have participated in the research from three private commercial banks (NMBB, CZBIL, Mega Bank Ltd.). Their demographic characteristics included are age, marital status, educational qualification, work experience, position and religious affiliation. The following tables present the details of respondents' profile.

Table I. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variable	Number	Percentage
Age		
20-25 Years	50	27.6
26-30 Years	82	45.3
31-35 Years	42	23.2
36-40 Years	2	1.1
41-45 Years	5	2.8
Marital Status		
Unmarried	109	60.2
Married	72	39.8
Divorcee	0	0
Education Qualification		
Bachelor Level	60	33.1
Master Level	114	63
Above Master Level	7	3.9
Work Experience		
Less 1 Year	38	21
1 to 5 Years	98	54.1
More than 5 Years	45	24.9
Position		
Operational Level	122	67.4
Middle Level	53	29.3
Top Level	6	3.3

(Source: Field Survey 2019)

In above frequencies and percentages, the researcher's most frequently observed category of the age group was 26-30 ($n=82$, 45.3%). The most frequently observed category of the marital status was unmarried ($n=109$, 60.2%). The most frequently observed education qualification was master level ($n=114$, 63%). Finally, the most frequently observed position was operating level ($n=122$, 67.4%).

Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviation, Correlation Matrix and Cronbach's Alpha

		Mean	SD	1	2	3
1.	LS	3.41	0.59	0.94	0.50	-
2.	OC	4.92	1.02	0.32	0.90	-
3.	EE	2.49	0.67	0.37	-	0.94

Source: Developed by the authors using data from questionnaire survey.

Notes: * $p<0.01$; LS (Leadership Style), EC (Organizational Commitment) and Employee Engagement (EE); Cronbach's alpha shown in diagonal.

In the above table, Pearson's correlation coefficients between study variables, mean, standard deviation and internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) are shown as it is indicative that leadership style organizational commitment and employee engagement ($\gamma=0.50$, $p<0.01$; $\gamma=0.32$, $p<0.01$; $\gamma=0.37$, $p<0.01$ respectively). Thus, there is significant positive relationship between LS, OC and EE.

Table 3. Bivariate Regression Analysis Results

Predictor (LS)	DV (EE)
Standardized Beta Coefficient	0.501**
R ²	0.251
F	7.745**
Predictor (OC)	DV (EE)
Standardized Beta Coefficient	0.366**
R ²	0.134
F	5.254**
Predictor (LS)	DV (OC)
Standardized Beta Coefficient	0.315**
R ²	0.099
F	4.445**

Source: Developed by author using data from questionnaire survey.

Note: ** $p<0.01$

As shown in the Table 3, the result indicates that the LS has significant impact on EE ($R^2=0.251$, $p<0.01$). Similarly, the result is indicative that the OC has significant impact on EE ($R^2=0.134$, $p<0.01$). Finally, it is found that the LS has significant impact on OC ($R^2=0.099$, $p<0.01$). Thus, the mediation effect can be examined among variables.

Mediating Effect of Organizational Commitment on LS and EE

It was found that LS was positively associated with EE ($B=0.501$, $t(178)=7.75$, $p<0.005$). Similarly, it was found that EE was positively associated with OC ($B=0.366$, $t(178)=5.25$, $p<0.005$). Likewise, it was found that EE was positively associated with OC ($B=0.315$, $t(178)=4.445$, $p<0.005$). Finally, after introducing the mediation effect, the results have shown that LS has positive association with EE ($B=0.366$, $t(178)=5.25$, $p<0.005$) and they have shown that EE has positive association with OC ($B=0.23$, $t(178)=3.485$, $p<0.005$). So, it implies that there is partial mediation of organizational commitment in relation to LS and EE.

Discussion

In this research, the researchers have postulated four hypotheses. After testing the hypotheses, the researcher has found that LS has significant impact on EE in Nepali Commercial Banks. Consistent with the finding of this research, Hayati, Charkhabi & Naami (2014) found that transformational leadership has a significant and positive impact on work engagement and its facets. Likewise, in the study of Bhatnagar (2007), the researchers found that one of the factors that increases engagement is supportive management, which is a trait that transformational leaders have. Thus, it is imperative to state that leadership styles can influence the employees of commercial banks to be more engaged in their workplace.

Secondly, the researchers found that LS has the significant impact of OC in Nepali Commercial Banks. Consistent with findings of this study, Ismail and Yusuf (2009) found the impact of transformational leadership on the followers' commitment and concluded that there is significant positive relation between these two variables. Moreover, Bateman and Strasser, (1984) have investigated the relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment. The results of this study confirmed earlier findings that the leadership style consideration variable had a stronger influence on commitment. Therefore, in Nepali Commercial Banks LS can positively impact Organizational Commitment.

Thirdly, the researchers found that EC is positively related with EE in Nepali Commercial Banks. It is consistent in the findings with Albdour & Altarawneh (2014) who found that employee engagement and organizational commitment are correlated to each other and they have a positive impact on each other in the Jordan banking sector. Similarly, Llorens et al. (2007) found that organizational commitment increases with an increase in the engagement levels of employees and employee engagement. So, it is imperative to say that OC can lead to EE in Nepali Commercial Banks.

Finally, to test the mediating effect of OC in relation between LS and EE, the researchers have found that both OC and

LS are significant to enhance Employee Engagement in Nepali Commercial Banks. This shows that there is partial mediation in the mediation effect. Thus, it can imply that LS and OC are equally important to increase the level of employee engagement in the workplace.

Implications and Directions for Future Research

This study has several limitations that need to be addressed in future research. First, all the study variables were captured from self-reported measures and therefore self-report bias cannot be ruled out. Second, since the samples for this study were drawn from only few commercial banks, this could seriously impact the generality of the research outcome. Similarly, the quantitative research method has been used to measure LS, EE and OC at the workplace in which all variables are subjective and so using quantitative methods may not reflect the perception or view of the employees completely.

Moreover, the findings of this study suggest several avenues for further research. In this study, a sample was drawn from several banks so the finding can be applied to train HR managers and leaders for enhancing organizational outcome. On the other hand, the researcher can explore the mediating effect of OC to find the possible mediation effect and similarly other variables such as the Psychological Capital can also be tested as mediator to analyze the effect of LS on EE.

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